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# **Health Information-Seeking Behavior on The COVID-19 Pandemic: Social Media Usage by Gen Z in Jakarta, Indonesia**

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## **Abstract**

The outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The increasing number of confirmed cases and deaths have escalated public fear about becoming infected, presenting a psychological trauma. During this condition, citizens have turned to internet as a mediating tool for communicating primary sources of information. The aim of this study is to explore how Generation Z in Jakarta using the internet, especially social media, for seeking health information during a pandemic. This study uses GoggleForm in May 2020. The number of respondents is 278 people. The major respondents were female (65.8%) and 86.7% were high school and university students. The result showed that almost all respondents (95.5%) required information regarding COVID-19 with different intensities and 91% continued to search the information. The most information sources were social media and news website. The social media platform frequently used are Instagram, Line, Twitter dan Youtube. The duration in accessing information was less than one hour. The respondents (44.5%) felt doubt regarding the validity of information received. However, they re-checked the information when they feel doubt.

**Keywords:** *Health information-seeking behavior, Covid-19, Generation Z, Social media*

## **Background**

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a global health crisis, affecting economies and societies around the world including Indonesia. Until Januari 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021, there were 765,350 infected cases with 22,734 people died and 631,937 others recovered from this disease (KPCPEN, 2021). Since World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic in the beginning of March 2020, Indonesian Government implemented various activities and published policies in preventing the spread of the pandemic.

Appeals, prohibitions, even large-scale social restrictions were implemented in order to decrease the cases. To cope with the rapid spread of the outbreak, citizens have to increase social awareness and reduce their social interactions. The social awareness require health protocols, such as social distancing, using mask, and washing hand. In fact, health care information during outbreaks of infectious disease can be significantly

affected on the behavior of citizens. Information plays an essential role in establishing the public awareness and forming suitable health behaviors.

The vital role of the information caused a dilemma because citizens can access various information immediately without restrictions and it can be difficult to notice the validity of the information. Receiving invalid information will cause mistakes in actions. Thus, information literacy plays a key function in building the cognition and awareness of the society to acknowledge and identify the validity of information that they received from many resources.

A specific information of health studies is known as Health Information Seeking Behavior (HISB). This action is caused by an information need related to health problems. This practice shows an performance in the context of health improvements through efforts of health information collection and as well as showing the mechanism of individuals finding the information (Mukherjee & Bawden, 2012). The health information is conducted in term of self-monitoring and self-care. Thus, this study uses the concept of HISB that focused on attempts to understand how and why people require health information, where they go to obtain the information, types of information based on their preference, and how the health information is utilized (Lambert dan Loiselle, 2007).

Generally, the concept of HISB occurred because it supported by a concern regarding health conditions or particular illness. This practice intensifies when the Internet becomes a general tool for society in obtaining information. Chen et al. (2018) shows that the utilization of the Internet influence the HISB. Moreover, health information seeking mostly use social media. The health information in social media is expected to facilitate people in understanding a particular health problem. Social media provides immediate access to large amount of health information and various perspectives on health topics for health information seekers. (Li et al., 2016)

Generation Z or popularly known as Digital Native refers to a group of society conducting their major activities by online. Helsper and Enyon (2010: 504) state that this population is a generation who makes the Internet as part of their lives. Generation Z or iGeneration (Internet generation) is born between 1995 and 2010. This generation has a similarity as generation Y but the generation Z can apply all activities at the same time (multi-tasking) such as operating social media using cell phone, browsing Internet using PC, and listening music using headsets.

All matters conducted is mostly related with cyberspace. This young generation has acknowledged technologies and familiar with sophisticated gadget indirectly influencing their personality. For generation Z, information and technologies are being part of their lives because they were born when the access of information, particularly the Internet has been a global culture, so this situation affects on their values, paradigms, and life goals. This condition, of course, attract attention and at the same time cause a public concern. They start to aware the need of knowledge completely, accurately, and correctly regarding the COVID-19 pandemic from various accessible resources. This information behavior is very interested to be explored especially when a lot of information circulating in the community is not true (fake information).

## **Methods**

This study used a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design conducting in Jakarta. The data were gained in May 2020. The respondents are generation G, from 15 to 24 years old. The samples were determined by convenience sampling technique. The number of samples is 278 youths calculated with N (Jakarta citizen number aged 15 to

24 years in 2019) = 1,476,283 based on BPS-Statistics of DKI Jakarta Province (2020), *confidence level* = 90%, *margin of error* = 5%. Ethical fulfillment was conducted through explanation about the study on the first page of the respondent's willingness to participate in the study. The data collection was conducted online using questionnaires distributed using google form. The data analysis used the univariate technique.

## Results

### Demographic Characteristics

Demographic characteristics of the respondents are reviewed based on three criteria i.e. gender, education and job. Majority respondents were female (65.8%), graduated from senior high school (79.1%) dan currently as students in high schools or universities (86.7%). Table 1 shows the respondents' demographic characteristics.

Table 1  
Respondent Demographic Characteristics (N = 278)

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	95	34.2
Female	183	65.8
Education		
Graduated from junior high school	23	8.3
Graduated from senior high school	220	79.1
Graduated from diploma degree	14	5.0
Graduated from bachelor degree	21	7.6
Job		
Students of high school/universities	241	86.7
Army/police	1	0.3
Self-employed	20	7.2
Entrepreneur	3	1.1
Others	8	4.7

### Need and Information Seeking regarding COVID-19

A few of respondents expressed never need information regarding COVID-19 (5.0%), the rest reveals the need of information about COVID-19 with different intensities. Majority of respondents (91%) declared that conducting information seeking about COVID-19. Table 2 shows the data in detail.

Table 2  
Need and Search of COVID-19 Information (N = 278)

Information Need and Search	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Need of COVID-19 Information		
Never	14	5.0
Rarely	12	4.3
Sometimes	88	31.7
Often	94	33.8
Always	70	25.2
Search of COVID-19 Information		
Yes	253	91.0
No	25	9.0

### ***Motivation in Seeking COVID-19 Information***

There are two greatest motivation of respondents in searching information about COVID-19. Majority is curiosity about COVID-19 (71,1%) and some of them because of following updated progress of the pandemic (56.5%) as seen in Table 3.

Table 3  
Motivation in Seeking COVID-19 Information (N = 253)

Motivation	Yes		No	
	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Curiosity about COVID-19	180	71.1	73	28.9
Following the updated information	143	56.5	110	43.5
Paying attention on the COVID-19 transmission	123	48.6	130	51.4
School/college assignments	63	24.9	190	75.1
Filling the free time	52	20.6	201	79.4

### ***Resources of COVID-19 Information***

There were two dominant resources for respondents in seeking information about COVID-19. Majority of respondents uses social media (78.3%) dan some of them obtaining the information from online news websites (55.3%) as shown in Table 4.

Table 4  
Sources of COVID-19 Information (N = 253)

Sources	Yes		No	
	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Social Media	198	78.3	55	21.7
Online News Website	140	55.3	113	44.7
Health Website	106	41.9	147	58.1
Indonesian Government Website	95	37.5	158	62.5
Television	90	35.6	163	64.4
Others	32	12.6	221	87.4

### ***Social Media as Exploration Sources of Information about COVID-19***

There were three social media used as the dominant sources for respondents in seeking information regarding COVID-19. There are Instagram (70.7%), and 44.9% for Line as a source and 42.9% for Twitter as shown in Table 5.

Table 5  
Social Media as Sources of COVID-19 Information (N = 198)

Social Media Used	Yes		No	
	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Instagram	140	70.7	58	29.3

Line	89	44.9	108	55.1
Twitter	85	42.9	113	57.1
Youtube	50	25.3	148	74.7
Whatsapp	27	13.6	171	86.4
Facebook	9	4.5	189	95.5
Others	5	2.5	193	97.5

### ***Reason of Seeking COVID-19 Information in Social Media***

There were three main reasons in seeking COVID-19 information in social media. More than half of respondents confirmed that social media is easier to be accessed (60.1%), more understandable (59.1%), and frequently to access it (59.1%). The detailed reasons can be read in Table 6.

Table 6  
Reason of Seeking COVID-19 Information in Social Media (N = 198)

Reasons	Yes		No	
	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Easier to be accessed	119	60.1	79	39.9
More understandable	117	59.1	114	45.1
Frequently to access	117	59.1	114	45.1
More interactive	39	19.7	159	80.3
The information is more complete	37	18.6	161	81.4
Interesting look	36	18.2	162	81.8
Trusted information	29	14.6	169	85.4

### ***Duration in Accessing Information about COVID-19 Pandemic using Social Media***

From respondents who provided their reasons, majority of them accessed the information about COVID-19 pandemic less than one hour per day (81.1%) as seen in detailed in Table 7.

Table 7  
Duration in Accessing Information about COVID-19 Pandemic using Social Media (N = 198)

Duration in Accessing Information	Frequency (n)	Valid Percentage (%)
Less than one hour	133	81.1
One to four hours	28	17.1
Five to eight hours	2	1.2
More than eight hours	1	0.6
Not answer	34	

### ***Trust in Information regarding COVID-19 Pandemic in Social Media***

Almost half of respondents were trust in information related to COVID-19 pandemic in social media (48.8%). On the other hand, others conveyed their doubt regarding the information (44.5%) as presented in Table 8.

Tabel 8  
Trust in Information regarding COVID-19 Pandemic in Social Media (N = 198)

<b>Trust in Information about COVID-19 in Social Media Covid-19 di Media</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Valid Percentage (%)</b>
Absolutely disbelief	2	1.2
Do not believe	3	1.8
Doubtful	73	44.5
Believe	80	48.8
Strongly believes	6	3.7
Not answer	34	

### ***Ability and Knowledge about Invalid Information***

More than half respondents were able to acknowledge invalid information (62.8%). Moreover, less than half of them understood legal consequences of spreading hoax (26,5%) as shown in Table 9.

Table 9  
Ability and Knowledge about Invalid Information (N = 253)

<b>Ability and Knowledge about Invalid Information</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Valid Percentage (%)</b>
Acknowledging hoax		
Yes	159	62.8
No	94	37.2
Understing legal consequences of spreading hoax		
Yes	67	26.5
No	186	73.5

### ***Attitude towards Fake News***

Majority of respondents revealed that they re-checked the information when they doubt the information (63.6%). However, they continued to spread the information eventhough the news was invalid (4,7%) as presented in Table 10.

Table 10  
Attitude towards Fake News (N = 253)

<b>Attitude towards Fake News</b>	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>	
	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Re-checking when doubt	161	63.6	92	36.4
Continuing to spread eventhough the news was invalid	12	4.7	241	95.3

### **Conclusion**

Generation Z use social media as the main source of information in obtaining various information including health information during the COVID-19 pandemic because they are familiar with digital world. The main reason why Generation Z prefer social media is this source contained information which not only in the form of text, but also provided images and videos, and they are easily accessible and understandable.

Therefore, Instagram is the most widely used platform that provides images and videos and as a dominant tool during pandemic to seek and share health information.

In addition, social media that uses mobile and web-based technology enables the development of interactive platforms so that individuals and communities can share, discuss and create stories together (Kietzmann, et al., 2011). This technological character is similar to the character of Generation Z who always want to share in every activity.

However, the advantage of social media in creating and developing informational content has been misused so that a lot of health information is not true. It makes Gen Zs doubted the health information which happened on social media. This matter caused most of people to re-check every time they receive information that they doubt. This kind of awareness in the context of health is needed because it is very dangerous if someone receives false information and misleading advice that can have a negative impact on their health and environment.

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